

# Lake Mead

## Environmental Education

National Recreation Area  
National Park Service



### Grade 3 - Field Program

### *"Walking in Balance"*



**Theme** Native Americans survived by using the natural resources they found in the Mojave Desert.

**Objectives** Students will describe three desert conditions that make it difficult to live in the desert.  
Students will identify at least three plants and how they were used by Native Americans.  
Students will describe at least two animals that were hunted by Native Americans.

**Vocabulary** adaptation - a physical or behavioral feature of an animal or plant that helps it survive in its environment  
desert culture - a way of life that people practiced for thousands of years almost unchanged, hunting and gathering dependent upon the resources of the desert  
hunter-gatherer - people who hunted and gathered food for survival  
nomadic - a life-style where people had no permanent home and moved from place to place in search of food and water, depending on the season (hunter-gatherers were nomadic)  
sedentary - a life-style where people do not move from place to place, but stay in one location for their food source (farmers are sedentary)

**Background Information** The Mojave Desert environment we experience today has only existed for about 8,000 years. Though the desert has extremely high air temperatures during the summer days, it cools rapidly in the evenings. Winter temperatures can reach below freezing. There is little annual rainfall (about 4-6 inches yearly), high rate of evaporation, extreme air temperatures, and a varying degree of wind. Before 8,000 years ago, this area was wetter and cooler. The people who lived here adapted to the changing environment and developed a desert culture that would last thousands of years.

People began to hunt such animals as bighorn sheep, rabbits, and lizards. They also gathered and processed a variety of plants. They used these desert resources for food, medicine, clothing, and shelter. Hunter gatherers, as they were called, traveled in small groups. Their movements were seasonal, following a pattern that took advantage of the resources available during the seasons. The Mojave Desert is a land of extremes. The early Native Americans had to be flexible, adaptive, and mobile.

**Before the Field Trip Activity** Have your students create their own field journals in preparation for their trip to Lake Mead NRA. Journals provide a means of recording observations in the field and can be accessed at a later date for comparison studies. Before the trip, discuss with your class where they get the things they need to live, for example, food, shelter, medicines, and clothing.

**After the Field Trip Activity** Now that the students have a better understanding of how the Native Americans lived in the Mojave Desert thousands of years ago, compare how living in the Mojave Desert today is different from early prehistoric and historic times.